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ABSTRACT

This learning activity package is designed to help apprentices understand some of the different ways in which words can be used to mean different things, depending on where and when one uses the words. It provides examples of words and phrases that are used in the workplace in ways different from the way they are used in regular conversation. Five units address these topics: (1) idioms and cliches; (2) words used in the trades; (3) what did he say?; (4) the workplace in the United States; and (5) more help for apprentices. Each unit contains some or all of these components: objectives, considerations to think about while the learner completes the unit, informational material, activity or activities, and considerations to think about when the learner completes the unit. (YLB)

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APPRENTICESHIP A PARTNERSHIP

A Learning Activities Package about Apprentices in the Workplace

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Apprenticeship Related Instruction Staff*

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PREFACE

People from any region of a country always have many ways to say something. When you have a limited number of words that you know and use in a language, often you will have difficulty understanding other words and other uses of familiar words. As a result, you probably can talk to others very well because you choose words you know. However, when listening to others speak to you, you may have difficulty understanding, because others (especially native speakers) use a wide variety of words. These words often have several meanings, and may be used to mean something other than the definitions in a regular dictionary.

This Learning Activity Package was developed to help you, if you are thinking about working in a trade or enrolling in the apprenticeship program. The purpose of this workbook is to help you understand the people in the place that you work. It will give you examples of words and phrases that are used in the workplace in ways different from the way you learned them in regular conversation. In addition, you will learn some things that your coworkers and your boss will expect from you at work, besides doing a good job in your trade.

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on making the decision to go through this workbook. You are about to discover some very strange and sometimes funny ways of using the English language.

This Learning Activity Package will help you understand some of the different ways words can be used to mean different things, depending on where and when you use the words. It will take some time to learn all of the phrases that mean something totally different than the meaning of the words themselves.

You must know that these phrases exist and you must ask someone for the meaning when you hear such a phrase. If you do not find out the meaning, then you cannot do the job. For example, "Shut her down" means "Turn off the engine". Someone could get hurt because they thought you turned off the engine, but you did not, because you did not understand. "Kill the juice" means "Turn off the electricity". One of your coworkers could be gravely injured because s/he began to work on a wire while electricity was flowing through it. Both of these examples involve phrases used in the trades that involve work performance and safety. These trade phrases are not explained in textbooks or classrooms because they use common words and common meanings.

UNIT ONE

IDIOMS AND CLICHÉS

IDIOMS AND CLICHÉS

OBJECTIVES: When you finish this unit you should know:

- About idioms and clichés
- That idioms and clichés say one thing and mean another

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHILE YOU COMPLETE THIS UNIT

Idioms are words or groups of words that cannot be understood from the sum of the individual meanings. You can clearly understand the meaning of each of the words in the phrase, but not understand the meaning of the sentence when an idiom is used.

Clichés are similar to idioms. They are a group of words with a special meaning. Many cliché's are not very important. Clichés are often used to mean that a person understands what was just said. This is done by using a cliché that is similar to what was said.

The American language is full of idioms and clichés. Most American students know and understand idioms and clichés because they have heard them often as they were growing up. Many instructors use idioms and clichés as an aid for the students to understand something in the course.

FIND THE IDIOM OR CLICHÉ

Each sentence below has an idiom or cliché in it. Draw a line under each idiom or cliché that you find.

Mike thought that it was OK to eat in class.

Bob doesn't know anything about the real world because he always has his head in the sand.

Jose missed his ride to work and found himself up a creek without a paddle.

Semone was not worried about missing her ride because she knew there was more than one way to skin a cat.

The electricians were running behind schedule.

SCORING: You should have underlined 6 problem phrases as shown below.

Mike thought that it was OK to eat in class.

Bob doesn't know anything about the real world because he always has his head in the sand.

Jose missed his ride to work and found himself up a creek without a paddle.

Semone was not worried about missing her ride because she knew there was more than one way to skin a cat.

The electricians were running behind schedule.

Compare the words that you marked with the words that are marked above. Count how many different groups of words that you marked.

If you found less than 6 or more than 10 you may have difficulty telling the difference between problem words (like idioms and clichés) and unfamiliar words. If a dictionary does not help you understand a sentence, a cliché or an idiom is probably the reason.

Read the meanings below so that you understand the clichés and idioms that were used in this unit.

OK - acceptable, reasonable, not good/not bad,

real world - life as it really is, not how someone's fantasy thinks it is. This usually is used to mean that the subject of the statement has only limited knowledge about something.

head in the sand - someone with their head in the sand cannot know what is going on. They cannot make proper decisions because they do not have all of the facts.

up a creek without a paddle - having a problem without any way to deal with the problem.

more than one way to skin a cat - there is always more than one way to do something.

running behind schedule - not completing as much as was expected for the amount of time that had passed.

You do not have to know the difference between an idiom and a cliché. A dictionary will not always help you to understand words as they are used. Now that you know about idioms and clichés you will know to seek an explanation from somewhere else.

The more clearly you can identify what you do not understand, the easier it is for someone to give you a good explanation. Sometimes the person can not explain the idiom or the cliché. For those times, ask the person to give an example, to demonstrate, or to explain the statement without using the words in the idiom or cliché.

Special books are available from local libraries and bookstores that list common idioms and clichés and their meanings. Many of these are written in a way that make them fun to read.

Some of them are:

Essential Idioms in English, Idioms in American Life, and/or What's Up? American Idioms, Prentice Hall Regents, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632.

UNIT TWO

WORDS USED IN THE TRADES

WORDS USED IN THE TRADES

OBJECTIVES:

When you finish this unit you should know:

- The importance of studying both trade terms and common words
- That it is often necessary to learn second, third or fourth meanings of words

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHILE YOU READ THIS UNIT

Each job has words that are used mostly in that type of work. Textbooks often have vocabulary lists (a glossary) at the back of the book that give meanings for those words. Sometimes special words are marked in the books by using a different type of letters (**bold** or *italics*) so that they can be noticed easily.

Most students will not have trouble with these words because the books and the teacher will explain them.

The words that will be the hardest to learn are the words that have one meaning when used outside of the trade and a different meaning when used by a tradesperson.

Some words have many meanings. Tradespeople will often use an uncommon meaning of a word. These meanings sometimes can be found in a dictionary at the end of the list of meanings for that word.

SELECT THE MEANING OF THE STATEMENT

Read one statement and then choose the right meaning of the statement. Circle the A or B of the meaning that you choose.

1. **The plumber had to go back to his shop to get the elbow he needed.**
 - A. The plumber has a problem with his arm and needed someone else to do his work.
 - B. The plumber did not have a special piece of material that he needed.
2. **The carpenter had to plumb the new wall before he nailed it in place.**
 - A. The carpenter had to do the plumber's job.
 - B. The carpenter had to make sure that the wall was straight before he nailed it in place.
3. **The plumber went to Mrs. Kim's house to snake out her drains.**
 - A. Mrs. Kim had a problem with snakes making nests in her drains.
 - B. The drains at Mrs. Kim's house were clogged. The plumber had to use a tool that looks and bends like a snake to open the drains.
4. **Cedric told his helper to tie the home run into the electrical panel.**
 - A. The electricians were playing baseball and the electrical panel was going to be the marker for a home run.
 - B. Cedric wanted the helper to connect the wire that goes between the first outlet on the circuit and the electrical panel so that power could be turned on.
5. **The drywall apprentice made a mistake and let the mud get dry.**
 - A. The apprentice forgot to pour more water into the mud puddle after the sun had come out.
 - B. The apprentice left the lid off the special mix that is used to fill in holes and cracks in drywall.

6. All drywall joints must be finished using both drywall compound and tape.
- A. Places where drywall has to bend back and forth need to have a slippery item applied and then be covered with a bandage.
 - B. The space where two pieces of drywall come together is called a joint. This space is filled and then covered with a special tape to prevent cracks.

SCORING: Count how many "B's" that you circled.

If you circled 5 or 6 you understand how common words can have special meanings when used at work in a trade. If you scored 0-4 read each of the six sentences. Then read the "B" line after the sentence.

This is only a very small sample of the way common words are used in the trades to mean special things. Whenever you are not sure about what has been said, ask questions.

Experience and listening practice will help you learn the new meanings.

UNIT 3

WHAT DID HE SAY?

WHAT DID HE SAY?

OBJECTIVES: When you finish this unit you will know:

- That you will need to learn many different words for each thing you learn
- Many different words can mean the same thing
- To do well in school or on the job you will need to learn many different ways to say things

A STORY TO READ

Read the following story. Then answer the questions that are written after the story.

JOSE AND THE BOSS

Jose wanted to earn some extra money so he said he would come to work on Saturday to help his boss. At 7:20 a.m. Jose and the boss arrived at work. They each poured a cup of coffee in the lounge before beginning their day.

Jose asked the boss, "What do you want me to do?"

The boss said, "All the floors need scrubbed. I will wax the floors."

Then, the boss left the room. He thought Jose knew what to do. When the boss came back 10 minutes later Jose was drinking his second cup of coffee. Jose was not working. Jose did not have tools or materials ready to start working.

The boss asked, "Why aren't you working?"

"You didn't tell me what to do," Jose said.

"The floors need to be scrubbed," said the boss a little louder.

"What do you mean scrubbed?" asked Jose.

"Scrubbed, I want you to scrub the floors. I want you to clean the floors, I want you to mop the floors, I want you to swab the deck, I want the floors cleaned, I want you to wash the floors," shouted the boss in an angry voice.

As Jose put on his coat and left he said to the boss, "Gee, if I knew there was going to be THAT much work I would not have offered to help!"

WAS THERE A BETTER WAY?

Was there a better way for Jose and the boss to handle this situation?

Write down your thoughts after each of the questions below.

1. What should the boss have done differently?

2. What should Jose have done differently?

The boss made four mistakes.

1. He did not really tell Jose to scrub the floors. The boss said, "the floors need to be scrubbed." The boss said that he would wax the floors. The boss did not say who would scrub the floors.

The boss thought that Jose would know that the floors had to be scrubbed before they were waxed. He thought Jose would know that Jose had to do the part of the job that the boss was not going to do.

2. The boss did not check to be sure Jose knew what to do. The boss did not know Jose didn't understand the word "scrubbed".
3. The boss did not make it clear to Jose that he only wanted one thing done. He did not tell Jose that all the things he said meant the same thing.
4. The boss should not have yelled at Jose. Communication is when information is sent, received, and understood. The boss didn't communicate with Jose. The boss spoke to Jose. That is, he sent information. The boss did not wait for signs that Jose received the information. Jose heard the words that were said but he did not receive the information that was in the words because he didn't know what "scrubbed" meant.

Jose made mistakes too.

1. Jose should have asked the boss what he meant by "scrubbed".
2. Jose should not have gotten mad.
3. Jose should not have left without talking to the boss about why he wanted to leave.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN YOU COMPLETE THIS UNIT

There are many different ways to say the same thing. Different parts of the United States tend to say things in different ways. People in the United States often move to other parts of the country, bringing new words and different ways to say things. This makes it very hard for someone learning the language of a new trade.

Ask your teacher to explain trade terms and words that have special meaning, or, ask the Apprenticeship Office if classes and/or other help are available in your area. Please do not get discouraged. Many people find it very hard to understand new ways of using words at first.

UNIT 4

THE WORKPLACE IN THE UNITED STATES

THE WORKPLACE IN THE UNITED STATES

OBJECTIVES:

When you finish this unit you should know:

- How good work habits can sometimes be misunderstood by coworkers
- How to be a good worker without getting your coworkers upset

WORKPLACE QUESTIONNAIRE

Place an X in the [] in front of each sentence below IF you understand why a coworker may get upset about it.

- [] 1. Gretchen brings cookies, brownies, or snacks to work for the boss each week.
- [] 2. Jim is always the first one to greet the boss, Susan, whenever she comes out to the jobsite. Jim tells Susan how nice she looks each time he sees her.
- [] 3. Simon often stays at work for an extra hour or more, even though everyone knows that the company will not pay any overtime pay.
- [] 4. Pepe arrives at work at 7:30 a.m. each morning and begins to work even though the company only pays it's employees from 8:00 to 5:00.
- [] 5. Krause never takes a coffee break. He stays at his desk and keeps on working while his coworkers relax.
- [] 6. Jose and Maria always talk to each other in Spanish every time they are together at work.

SCORING: Count how many []'s you have put an X in.

If you marked 5 or 5 then you know of things that upset coworkers. You do not have to read the explanation section below. You may move on to the summary for this unit on page 19.

If you marked 4 or less than you may not know your coworkers very well. Please read the explanation that follows.

EXPLANATION:

1. and 2. When Gretchen brings cookies, brownies, or snacks in to work for the boss it looks like she is trying to earn special favors from the boss. When Jim compliments the boss, Susan, on how nice she looks every time she comes out to the jobsite, his coworkers think that Jim is trying to get special treatment from the boss. It is good to do nice things, but it should be done only occasionally. Your coworkers want you to be judged by how well you do your job, not on how well you get along with the boss. Workers want to feel that they all have an equal chance to earn raises and promotions based on professional skills and productivity.

3. and 4. When Pepe and Simon do company work without getting paid for the work, the company is getting free labor. The bosses may start to expect everyone to put in free time. Labor unions and the American workforce in general have worked very hard to be sure that companies do not cheat workers by demanding free labor. If there is enough work for people to feel the need to do extra work, then someone else should be hired. The boss will not hire another person, if you will do the work for free. Even one person working for free can be cheating a coworker out of overtime pay that they may need to help pay bills. Coworkers do not want to look bad because they do not work for free too. When many people work for free, the boss does not know how much work it really takes to get the job done. When business starts to slow down the boss will think fewer people are needed and then someone gets fired!

5. When Krause stays at his desk working right through break his coworkers may feel he is giving the company free time just like Pepe and Simon. They may feel that Krause does not want to be friends with them.
6. When Jose and Maria speak to each other in Spanish so often, the coworkers feel left out. They may think that Jose and Maria are saying things that they do not want their coworkers to know. The coworkers may feel that Jose and Maria are saying bad things about them.

SUMMARY

Your coworkers may feel threatened by you because they think you are out to take their jobs. They may feel that you are doing things that will give you an unfair advantage when the boss considers and gives promotions, and layoffs.

It has taken many years to develop a good arrangement between companies and their workers so that the workers get all that they earn. Many workers get very upset when they see something they think will hurt that arrangement.

Most workers want to be friends with their coworkers. There may already be cultural barriers, so you need to take extra care to join your coworkers at break and at lunch so that you can get to know them, and they can get to know you, too.

UNIT 5

MORE HELP FOR APPRENTICES

MORE HELP FOR APPRENTICES

OBJECTIVES: When you finish this unit you should know:

- More ways to become a successful student
- Other places where you can get help

Mark an X in the [] for each sentence that applies to you.

- [] 1. I need to hear things twice before I understand them.
- [] 2. I don't know what Classes, Etc. is.
- [] 3. I did not finish high school.
- [] 4. I still don't understand idioms and clichés.
- [] 5. I do well with English at home or while shopping but I have trouble with the words used at work.
- [] 6. I do well with English but I have friends and family who need to study English.
- [] 7. I would like to have someone in class to translate words for me.

SCORING: Look at the number of each statement that you marked. Find that statement below and read the information that is written below that statement.

- [] 1. I need to hear things twice before I understand them.

Some classes can be taken on a choice of nights. Some students find it helpful to attend BOTH classes. This requires the student to enroll and pay for two courses.

With permission from the teacher, you can tape the class and listen to the class at home.

. [] 2. I don't know what Classes, Etc. is.

Classes, Etc. is a newspaper that lists more than 1800 class choices every winter, spring, summer, and fall. It is mailed to all addresses in Fairfax County four times a year. It has adult education classes for English as a Second Language (ESL), improving work skills, gaining new work skills, hobby interests, and classes about things you would never think there would be a class about. You can look at a copy of Classes, Etc. at any Fairfax County Public Library or at one of these Adult Centers:

Bryant Adult Center (703) 660-2000
2709 Popkins Lane
Alexandria, VA 22306

Pimmit Hills Adult Center (703) 506-2357
7510 Lisle Avenue
Falls Church, VA 22043

Woodson Adult Center (703) 323-7555
9525 Main Street
Fairfax, VA 22031

[] 3. I did not finish high school.

For information about receiving a high school diploma see Classes, Etc. or call (703) 506-2340.

For information about taking a test for high school credit, see "GED Test" in Classes, Etc. or call (703) 506-2230.

For information about the GED en espanol call (703) 506-2211.

[] 4. I still don't understand idioms and clichés.

There are many workbooks available on idioms and clichés that will give you a much deeper understanding of them. You can borrow them from a library or buy them at a bookstore.

- [] 5. **I do well with English at home or while shopping but I have trouble with the words at work.**

There are classes that are designed to meet the needs of those who have limited English skills. Some are designed to be taken in addition to your regular job training class. Some are changed to make it easier for special groups of students. Ask if the trade courses you are interested in include Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL). Ask if you can take VESL classes while you take your other job training classes.

Also, you can enroll in additional basic classes in your choice of trades. Basic classes repeat words and phrases in many different ways.

- [] 6. **I do well with English but I have friends and family who need to study English.**

See Classes, Etc. or call for information on English as a Second Language classes.....

in English, call (703) 893-1093
in Spanish, call (703) 506-2262
in Korean, call (703) 506-2363
in Vietnamese, call (703) 506-2364
in Farsi, Khmer, and Chinese, call (703) 506-2365

- [] 7. **I would like to have someone in class translate words for me.**

You may be given permission to have a friend come to class with you to translate important words. First, you need to be sure that the teacher will allow you to talk quietly to your friend during class. Second, you have to be sure that the school officials will allow it. If the school doesn't allow a translator to sit in class with you, the translator can enroll as a student.

SUMMARY

You have just finished a learning activity designed to help you succeed in classes you take. You should have a better idea of how classes in apprenticeship are taught. You should have a better idea of some things you can do to make it easier to learn. Please remember that there are a lot of people and programs working to help you to learn more, to learn more easily, and to be successful in the workplace.

There are many, many employers who are looking for good workers like you.

WHO CAN GIVE YOU MORE INFORMATION?

- For a Class Bulletin listing classes in job related instruction, contact:

Ellen Andrews Carlos
Apprenticeship Coordinator
Fairfax County Public Schools
7510 Lisle Avenue
Falls Church, Virginia 22043

(703) 506-2300

or

Joe Teets
Program Specialist for Trade and Industrial Classes
Fairfax County Public Schools
7510 Lisle Avenue
Falls Church, Virginia 22034

(703) 506-2235

- For Employment Counseling and Job Placement Assistance, contact:

Janet Flammey/Terry Phillips
Apprenticeship Information Center
Virginia Employment Commission
386 South Pickett Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22306

(703) 823-4135

- If you are already working at a trade and your employer is willing to set up an apprenticeship program, ask your employer to contact:

John Jardine/Darlene Gibbons
Apprenticeship Representatives
Virginia Department of Labor and Industry
Suite 302, 11211 Waples Mill Road
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

(703) 691-0351